MUSIC AS TAUGHT IN WASHINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Little Chat With Miss Bentley, Who Has Charge of the Department Devoted to "Teaching the Young Idea How to Sing."

OF all the branches taught at the public schools of Washington, the one that is most enjoyable to the pupils and most intresting to those who visit the schools is music. Under the administration of Miss Alys E. Bentley, who has been director of music in the schools for three years, a marked development in this work has been shown. Miss Bentley has sought to make it interesting for teachers and pupils alike, and anyone who is present at the singing period in one of the high schools can readily believe she has succeeded.

There is no air of drudgery about the singing. The pupils all enter into it with every evidence of thorough enjoyment. Pupils and teacher seem to understand each other perfectly and to work together throughout, and, indeed, most of the pupils in the high schools say frankly that they like the music hour better than any other part of their school work.

Music Is a Major Study.

Music began in the public schools about sixty years ago, but was not made a major study until last year. Previous to that time it was elective, and no pupil who did not wish to take music need do so. So great has been the development of this branch of study under Miss Bentley, however, that it was decided to make it a major study and put it into the curriculum so that every pupil in the graded schools and in the high schools should receive regular instruction in singing.

The originator of vocal teaching in the public schools was Joseph H. Daniels, who took up the work in the early '50's, and furnished the inspiration for all that was to follow. Music was the first of the special branches to be introduced into the school, and preceded drawing, cooking, sewing, manual training and the other similar studies by several years. Mr. [illegible] remained in charge of music until his death, which occurred five years ago. He was succeeded by M[illegible] Campbell, who, in turn, was succeeded by Miss Bentley. Miss Bentley has been in charge for three years.

At first the singing was of the most elementary character, the pupils being taught in a mechanical manner. They sang their scales and learned simple little pieces in which there was plenty of notes but no music. The singing hour, or "period," as it is called in the schools, was not marked by any particularly interesting features. Those of the pupils who were natural musicians found nothing in it to entertain them, while those who were not were bored.

Reign of Miss Bentley.

With the coming of Miss Bentley the whole course was changed. She injected new life into the system, with the result that singing is now a most popular branch with the pupils, who welcome the singing hour as they do recess. Miss Bentley is from New York. She has studied for a number of years, and, in addition to pronounced native talent, she is equipped with an excellent musical education and training. She has ideas of her own in regard to the teaching of music to a large number of pupils, and they are so good that she has come to have her own way absolutely in the conduct of her department.

Miss Bentley has under her sixteen assistants, ten for the white schools and six for the negro schools. An assistant director, Miss H. A. Gibbs, has charge of the work in the negro schools. Those who assist Miss Bentley in the white schools are E. S. Tracy, Mrs. C. V. Byram, Miss J. E. Tabler, Miss C. A. Johnston, Miss K. R. Keene, Miss Miriam Bangs, R. S. Sliney, Miss Julia B. Stromberger and the accompanist, Miss Saline T. Mason. Those in the negro schools are, in addition to Miss Gibbs, H. F. Grant, John T. Layton, Miss Lola Johnson, Mr. McJames, J. E. Wormley and Miss Mary Europe, accompanist.

Like a great many persons who have achieved success, and whose work is still going forward and improving day by day, Alys E. Bentley is very modest. It is difficult to get her to tell anything about herself, and in answer to the most direct questions concerning her study and training, she returns evasive answers and inevitably turns to the subject of her work. The school authorities, however, haven't the same reticence regarding Miss Bentley that this accomplished young teacher has about herself, but are loud in their praises of the work she has done and is doing. From Superintendent Stuart down to the heads of the rooms in the graded schools and the assistants who work under her, everyone sought to impress upon the reporter for The Sunday Times that the whole credit for the present high standard that prevails in the musical work of the public schools is due to the personality and the capability of Miss Bentley.

What Miss Bentley Says.

Upon the strength of this high praise the reporter sought out Miss Bentley, with a desire to have her confirm some of the statements that had been made concerning her and her work. He asked her to tell him something about herself and where she has studied. Miss Bentley smiled an enigmatic smile.

"I have not studied under any of the great masters," she replied, "nor am I a graduate of any of the foreign conservatories. There is nothing you can say about me."

"But I have been told that you are responsible for the present high-class work that is being done at the schools, and that since you took charge a marked improvement has been shown."

"I don't think that is true," she replied, with a perfectly straight face. "I think the credit belongs more to the assistant teachers and to the pupils themselves. The teachers all work hard and the pupils are very enthusiastic. They do most of the work themselves."

The reporter gave up in despair, after a few more questions along the same line, and turned his attention to the work itself. Miss Bentley was as willing to discuss the question from this viewpoint as she was unwilling to talk about herself.

"The main object of our endeavors," she said, "is to develop in the pupils a thorough appreciation and understanding of music. With so many pupils it is, of course, impossible to develop individual voices and we make no attempt to do so. Our idea is to create a musical atmosphere and imbue the pupils with a love of music, a love of the best music. Of course our work is entirely choral work.

How They Are Taught.

"Music in the schools must recognize as its mission the elevation of the masses of pupils to a high standard of musical appreciation. The best natural talent will then not be dragged down, but stimulated, and those pupils who have little or no talent will be benefited through good association. In every grade the hearing and singing of a great number of songs, covering a wide variety of musical expression and chosen always with a view to their musical worth, is the forerunner of the technical study of music. The children in the lower grades come, through natural experience in song, to recognize symbol records of music, or notes, as stepping-stones to the interpretation. Training in sight reading has come to be not the end, but the means to an end, and is recognized as such by the children in every grade. They soon learn that they can get along much more quickly and easily by knowing how to read at sight, and they pick it up very rapidly.

"Every effort is made to encourage the child's desire to sing, for upon this desire our whole system is practically based. They first learn by mere imitation, then they are made familiar with the notes of a song already learned by ear, and then made to learn new songs by reading at sight. They are encouraged to take their singing books home with them, which is not only improving to the children themselves, but is also the means of widening the influence of our musical instruction.

To Stimulate Interest.

"To further stimulate their interest, large choruses are formed toward the close of the school year, when the children from several schools sing together. This work is most successful in the high schools, where several hundred pupils sing together regularly throughout the school term. In every grade there has been an effort to widen musical experience by hearing the best music. Again, through the nature of conditions, this phase of the work finds its best expressions in the high schools. It has not been difficult to enlist the interest of artists of high musical standing, and many recitals have been given by them at the high schools. Among those who have given us the benefit of their talent are Oscar Gariessen, Charles Rabold, Florence Holtzen, Janet Spencer, Walter Rummell, Stanley Armistead, and Mr. Fabian. We all feel very much encouraged by the work done in the past year and thus far in the present session. Teachers and pupils alike seem to take an intense interest in the music, and when that condition prevails there is no way of stopping progress."

Daily Work in Graded Schools.

In the graded schools music is taught daily, the opening period being devoted to singing. Every teacher who qualifies to teach in the graded schools must pass an examination in music and must be able to teach the little ones under her. In the high schools there are two singing periods a week. The girls and the boys each have a period when they sing by themselves, and once a week the whole school sings together. The girls are divided into two sections, each section having a different part, as are the boys, and when they sing together there are four parts to the chorus.

Pupils Enjoy Choral Singing.

It is most pleasant to hear all the pupils in one of the high schools singing together. They all seem to enjoy it thoroughly, and to enter into the spirit of their songs as if they were at recreation instead of doing part of the school work. They sing the best music from modern composers, as well as the best standard compositions of the highest class. Among the compositions the high school choruses have done recently are the "Pilgrims' Chorus," from "Tannhauser," Handel's "Largo," and "The Glory of the Lord."

A most important branch of the work conducted by Miss Bentley and her assistants is the instruction of the normal school students, for music in the normal school means the training of teachers to carry out the instruction of music under the plan followed in the graded schools. They are first given instruction in the development of the voice; then they acquire acquaintance with a vast number of children's songs and are taught the interpretation of children's songs and methods in teaching. Frequent meetings of teachers in the music department are held in order that the work throughout the schools may be uniform.

Girls' Singing Class at Western High School, Georgetown.

"Our Idea is to Create a Musical Atmosphere and Imbue the Pupils With a Love of Music—a Love For the Best Music."

Where Playing Cards Are Manufactured

A MANUFACTURER is authority for the statement that 12,500,000 packs of playing cards were sold in the United States last year. These cards were made in thirty-eight factories, fifteen of which are in New York. That city is the second, if not the greatest, card center in the world. The rivalry between it and London is close. London produces about 4,000,000 packs and New York about 3,325,000 packs annually.

The playing cards made in America, and especially those made in New York, are the handsomest, the most durable and convenient known in the trade. The European makers are satisfied with old styles and methods. The average pack of cards in London, Paris, Madrid, Vienna and Berlin is much the same today as it was in the beginning of the last century. Those made in this country show improvement from year to year. American manufacturers were the first to introduce the rounded corners and the "squeezer" and the elaborately designed backs and the elastic satin glaze finish which makes new cards so handsome and increases their durability.

The material used for making the best cards is the finest linen paper, while for the cheaper grades wood pulp is used. All the cards are printed and cut on rapid running machines and costly printing ink, dye and gold and silver leaf are used to color and decorate the faces and backs of the goods. Playing cards range in price from 5 cents to $1 and more a pack. The American market is a curious one. Comparatively few persons care to buy the cheapest kinds of cards. It is the 25 and 50 cent qualities which sell the best.

A Weather Prophet Who Has Been in Business More Than Two Thousand Years

He Is Mr. Groundhog, and He Is Due to Have His Say on Next Tuesday

ALL the weather-wise people profess to believe in the groundhog and his prophesying power. They avow with great solemnity that this little animal emerges from the nest at the bottom of his winter quarters on the morning of February 2 and takes a look about him. If on that auspicious morning he catches a glimpse of a black shadow behind him he makes all haste to be back in his warm nest of leaves for another nap of six weeks. If, however, the skies are cloudy and he fails to see even the faintest show of a shadow he makes preparation for his spring work, shakes off his lethargy, and begins to live once more.

There are a great many people who believe in the groundhog and groundhog day, and they watch the day with great anxiety, especially when coal is dear, so they will get some idea of just about how much more money they must spend before they begin to buy ice instead of fuel. All believers in the groundhog agree as to his manner of foretelling the weather, but they do not all agree as to the time when he appears. Some tenaciously cling to the idea that the little animal makes his survey February 2, while others as tenaciously hold that he comes up to take a weather squint February 14, or on St. Valentine's Day.

The only way to settle this dispute is to delve back into folklore and mythology, when it is really seen that February 2 is the true groundhog day. But it is quite easy to see how the people have become confused in their dates. Our ancestors were in the habit of keeping two high old feast days during the month of February. They borrowed these festivals from the Romans, who conquered England about the time of the birth of Christ. The first feast was in honor of Februus, mother of Mars, and the second was in honor of Lupurculus, which occurred on February 15. There was much feasting on both these days, and the celebrations were as sumptuous and as lively as possible for the roistering participants to make them.

Februus' day was considered the turning point of winter, and on that day a great quantity of candles were burned.

At Lupurcalia it was thought that birds and animals mated, and the custom of drawing names whereby single men obtained wives was widely prevalent. The feast was in honor of fertility and it was thought that unions formed on that day were particularly fruitful ones.

But when Europe became Christianized the masses of the people were determined to keep up their feasting on these two great days. The religious leaders also saw that it would not do to let them pay reverence to heathen gods, so they hit upon a happy expedient. In the place of Februus' Day, they appointed a feast of the church called Candlemas, and Lupurcalia was changed to St. Valentine's Day. The people, however, still persisted upon processions and burning candles on the day, and the drawing of names, so the priests winked at the customs, but from that time on the days had new meanings.

The Scriptures say that forty days after the birth of Christ the Virgin Mary took the infant Jesus to the temple and Simeon took the child in his arms and prophesied that he "should be a light unto the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel." Taking Christmas as the birthday of Christ, the day he was brought to the temple would have been February 2. The church chose to celebrate this temple visit rather than keep a heathen goddess' festival. The new feast day was variously called St. Simeon's Day, Wives' Feast Day, Purification Day, and Christ's Presentation. Gradually these were superseded by the name which yet prevails in Catholic and Episcopalian communities, which is Candlemas Day.

It received the name candlemas because a special mass was held upon that day, and because all the candles that were to be used upon the altar for the coming year were solemnly blessed at that time. There were long processions indulged in and a great display of lighted candles. All of this has been much modified, but the rural population of England to this day still retain the idea that February 2 is the turning point of winter. Some of the old weather rhymes are yet preserved:

If on candlemas day the thorn hangs a drop,
Then you are sure of a good pea crop.

The farmer should have on candlemas day
Half his turnips and half of his hay.

If candlemas is fair and clear
There'll be two winters in the year.

Again an Analogy.

And the groundhog's connection with candlemas? It is again an analogy. The marmot family to which the European marmot and American groundhog belong are dormant in winter, yet do not hibernate as completely as the bear or bat. At the approach of cold weather they curl up asleep at the bottom of their deep burrows. But in midwinter, about the time of the usual February thaw, the groundhog comes out and stretches himself. By a peculiar instinct he is able to foretell the weather several days ahead. When his sagacity tells him that an early breakup is at hand he frisks about the opening of his den. When a reactionary storm period threatens he pops into his hole again and goes to sleep, not reappearing for weeks.

St. Valentine's Day.

And the transfer of groundhog day with a part of the people to Valentine's Day, twelve days later? Analogy again. In non-ritualistic Protestant communities candlemas day ceased to be observed. By an easy transfer the old feastings and traditions were passed on to Valentine's Day, which was long a day of much mirth. Hunters and ramblers would observe the groundhog, taking one year with another, quite as often on Valentine's Day as their candlemas brothers would on the 2d of the month. And when traditions were handed down by word of mouth instead of being fixed in black and white, it was an easy matter to confound the traditions belonging to a day that had ceased to be observed as belonging rather to the festival yet commemorated.

And so it remains that the real groundhog day is February 2, a relic of heathenism 2,000 years before our days.

Left-Handed Penmen Not Wanted as Clerks

FEW people know that the heads of the several departments of the Government in Washington are entirely willing to overlook bad penmanship on the part of a really good and industrious clerk, but it is the man or woman who writes with the left hand at which the balk is made. The dead-line is drawn just the moment it is ascertained that a clerk is left-handed and he is forthwith informed that if it is his desire to continue in Government service it will be necessary for him to write with his right hand. This information is always a bitter pill for the left hand pen holders, but there is nothing to be done but begin to write with the right hand or "throw up the job," and few are anxious to quit Government service even for this cause. No matter how perfect a hand the left-handed clerk may write there is no alternative but to learn to write with the right hand, and sometimes it takes months to get to the point, where even a legible hand is written by the clerk who is forced to "learn the business over." But during this period of making the change the chiefs are easy and patient and make the work as light as possible on the unfortunate clerk.

One of the best men in the Department of Commerce and Labor began his career in the Bureau of Statistics. He had left a proofreader's desk in the Government Printing Office to accept the clerkship in the bureau. He began to write with his left hand and he almost threw a fit when the chief told him to put the pen in the right hand, that left-handed penmanship didn't go. Then it was that he wished he was back in the big printery, where any kind of "handwriting" passed muster, just so the correct marking was made on the proof and was plain enough for the compositor to decipher.

Drank Poison In Court to Save Woman Accused of Murder

BRIG. GEN. LEONARD W. COLBY, who is under charges in connection with alleged misappropriation of funds belonging to the Nebraska militia, has figured in the public eye on several occasions. He is inordinately fond of show. Many years ago he bought the white Arabian stallion which was presented to General Grant by the Sultan of Turkey. This spread his fame abroad throughout the land, and the horse became the center of attraction in every parade in which Colby took part—and he missed few west of the Missouri River.

But Colby's greatest claim to notoriety rests on the fact that he is probably the only lawyer who ever swallowed deadly poison in order to obtain a client's acquittal. At this time he was a struggling lawyer in Beatrice, Neb. He was called upon to defend a woman accused of killing her husband by poisoning him with arsenic. The evidence was practically conclusive, and there was hardly a flaw in the case presented by the prosecution. The husband's body had been exhumed, the stomach taken out, analyzed, and the poison found and placed in a bottle. There was indubitable proof that the woman had administered the poison, and General Colby did not contest this point. He merely laid stress on the contention that the man had died from natural causes, and that the poison found in his stomach was not sufficient to cause his death. On this point, however, his expert testimony was rather weak, and he had to impress the jury by some other method.

Colby's office was in a building adjoining the court house. When he entered the court house after the noon recess to make his argument for the defense he appeared a little bit more nervous than usual, but this was attributed to the highstrung temperament that seems characteristic of the born orator. His speech was eloquent and the peroration dramatic.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, in summing up, "I contend that the poison my client is said to have administered to her husband was not enough to kill any man, to say nothing of one possessing his constitution. He died from some other cause. If that poison would have killed him it would kill me."

He picked up the bottle of poison from the table before him.

"There is not enough poison there to kill a kitten. I will prove to you that there is not enough to kill a man."

Before anyone could prevent him he pulled out the cork, threw back his head, and drained the bottle. Then he stood before the jury, his black eyes flashing, and thundered out:

"Gentlemen of the jury, if this poison kills me you can convict my client, but if I live—as I shall—you will have to bring in a verdict in her favor."

With a parting bow to the judge and the twelve men in the jury box he walked rapidly out of the courtroom to his office, where he locked himself in. In twenty minutes he was back in the court room, smiling and confident. It took the jury about three minutes to bring in a verdict of acquittal.

A few days afterward it leaked out that General Colby had a doctor in his office and that the physician had removed the poison—enough to have killed ten men—with a stomach pump. Of course, there was an uproar, but the law says a prisoner's life cannot be twice placed in jeopardy. And then, as a wise old lawyer suggested, Colby had destroyed the only evidence upon which conviction could be secured in event of another trial.

A Detective's Story of His First Experience

"I SHALL never forget," said a well-known local detective to a Times man a few days ago, "the first time I was given any detective work to do. I was only about eighteen years of age and I thought if I could only get put on some big case I could make a name for myself throughout the whole country. I saw my picture in all the yellow journals as the greatest detective of the age. Then I got my first job.

"I was employed at a private detective agency that took nothing but legitimate cases of a decent character, as the best of the detective agencies all do. I used to carry messages back [illegible] swer questions when [illegible]'l that sort of thing, [illegible] I had never had [illegible] do. Then, one day [illegible]eau called me up [illegible]d some 'shadow' [illegible] My head and my [illegible]e feet each and [illegible] professional air and [illegible] me what was [illegible]

"[illegible] man who belonged to a prominent family here in Wash[illegible]ington, but he was inclined to be wild, and the people wanted to get a line on [illegible] He was supposed to work in a lawyer's office, but he had a way of reporting there about 9 in the morning and then going out and staying all day. Sometimes his family would not see him for two or three days. As he was getting no pay from the lawyer, but was simply reading law under him, he did not lose his job. Still, he was doing nothing and his family was worried. The idea was that I was to pick him up as he left the office that morning and stay with him until he went home. He was pointed out to me by a member of his family as he came to work, and then I was left to handle the case.

"It was an April day, and the weather was quite warm. The sun was shining hot when we started out, and I was wearing a brand new white flannel suit, which I was very proud of. As soon as my man came out of the lawyer's office, which was on F Street northwest, between Fifth and Sixth Streets, I started after him. It was then about 10 o'clock. First, he went along F Street, and then down Ninth. A few blocks down he went into a saloon and stayed half an hour. When he came out I could see he had been drinking a good deal. He came back to F Street and walked up and down an hour. I followed him on the other side of the street. Every now and then he would stop at a saloon and take a drink. Then he went down to Pennsylvania Avenue and walked up and down until about 2:30 o'clock, going into a shop now and then, or stopping to talk to friends.

"Shortly after 2:30 he took a street car and went up the Avenue as far as the White House. He got off there and walked through the park and out Sixteenth Street to what is now the Hotel Gordon. By that time it had begun to rain. I had no umbrella and had had nothing to eat since breakfast. I did have a sandwich or two in my pocket, and when he went into the hotel I sat down on a carriage stone opposite and ate them. It began raining hard, and very soon my new suit was wringing wet. I got under a tree, but the leaves were thin and afforded little protection.

"There I sat until 12:30 o'clock that night, with that fellow in the hotel all the time. The rain kept up steadily, and I kept getting wetter and wetter, and hungrier and hungrier. When he did come out he had two or three friends with him and they were pretty drunk. I stuck with them, though, and after walking a few blocks up Sixteenth Street they parted, my man going one way and his friends the other. When he reached home and went in the front door it was 1:15. I had been right with him for fifteen hours and a quarter and not a thing of interest had happened. I had expected something big, of course, and when I got back to the office and told what had happened and thought over my ruined suit, I was as sick a boy as you ever saw. I learned right then and there that detective work is not the easiest nor always the most interesting work in the world."

A "Chinese Wall" of Barbed Wire On the Canadian Boundary

WHERE the notion arose that a Chinaman can't climb a barbed-wire fence is hard to understand, but that he is believed to be incapable of it is indicated by a bill recently introduced in Congress. This bill provides that a barbed-wire barrier be constructed along the Canadian border with electrical warning connections, to make the smuggling of Chinese into this country more liable to detection, and it is proposed to make use of the same plan along the Mexican border.

Since the barbed-wire fence has been subjugated by womankind in the country and now offers no obstacles to her onward march, not even snagging her petticoat as she proceeds lightly over it close to the post, her clothes wrapt tightly about her limbs, there is no reason why a Chinaman cannot go over any barbed-wire fence that could be constructed. He can put his blouse inside his trousers. Then, there are other ways to circumvent, or, more exactly, to elude, a barbed-wire fence by going between the strands. Every well-informed person knows that by placing the foot on the lower wire and lifting the one above it with the hands, an aperture is made, through which persons of ordinary bulk may pass without so much as touching. It requires two to make this breach, so every Chinese blockade runner will need a pal.

It is rather mystifying that such extraordinary pains should be taken to keep Chinese out of the United States when the easiest method of exclusion would be simply to order all of them to go home, and fix a date for them to be gone. The Chinese exclusion act is, in fact, a subterfuge and an evasion. If the object of anti-Chinese legislation is to prevent Chinese cheap labor from entering into competition with American labor, why is there so much beating about the bush? Why not have an exclusion act that excludes?

Mr. Wong Kai Kah has dwelt so much on the various phases of Chinese exclusion with a particular insistency that there may have been some slight uncertainty as to whether he were not something of a missionary against the Chinese exclusion act as well as commissioner to the World's Fair. But a barbed-wire fence would be no more effective than the present "slazey" exclusion law.

Wild Dogs in Pennsylvania

A PACK of wild dogs, almost as savage as wolves, has been discovered in the wilds of Wyoming county, Pa.

These wild curs are believed to be the offspring of two dogs once owned by a hermit who lived in the wilds. When the old man was taken in charge by the poor overseer, the dogs remained in the woods.

They are even then wolf-like in their habits and haunts, and the wild canines now infesting the "slushings" are doubtless the offspring of these. Hunters will endeavor to exterminate the pack before they become more numerous. Wild dogs are known to have attacked men, so that the territory in which they live holds new terrors for those who find it necessary to go into that section.